




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Gregory Electorate, Airfare Prices

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (2.55 pm): I rise to highlight some serious concerns about regulated air route travel for Western Queensland. Last month it was cheaper to fly from Longreach to Auckland than it was to fly to the Queensland capital city of Brisbane. On 27 February I could fly from Longreach to Brisbane one way for \$458 but I could fly from Longreach to Auckland, New Zealand at the cheaper price of \$429. The price schedule bears no connection to people's needs. It does not appear to reflect the traffic patterns either. Not many people would be travelling to Auckland compared to travelling to Brisbane. When they need to go to Brisbane a family of five will pay over \$4,500 for the airfares. This puts air travel out of the question for many Western Queenslanders including family groups, seniors and wage earners.

The unusual airfare structure raises questions about the oversight of the Queensland government's aviation contracts in the regulated airports of Barcaldine, Blackall and Longreach. I raised this issue in parliament in November and still nothing has changed. Brisbane is the key centre for people living in the central west. It is usually where our medical evacuations are sent and so loved ones often follow family members at their own expense so that they can be there to support them. A family of five may well be travelling at short notice to farewell grandma who has previously been taken to Brisbane as a medical evacuation.

People also need to travel to Brisbane regularly for business, education, banking and legal matters, and they are understandably fed up with the costs and the lack of transparency in the pricing structure. The Queensland government is supposed to ensure that a so-called resident's fare is available to people. This sets the fare for a flight from Longreach to Brisbane at \$170, but people say they can never get a resident's fare. The normal experience for residents is to pay just under \$500 one way per passenger. A lack of transparency is also the problem. It leaves people wondering what they have to do to get a resident's fare to Brisbane.

People would like to know how many residents fares are made available on the daily flight basis into and out of these airports and what they have to do to qualify. The Deputy Premier and Minister for Transport should investigate these outcomes for residents in Queensland's central west. Some of the questions the Deputy Premier could ask on behalf of Western Queenslanders is: how many seats per annum are available for the residents fare price? The Deputy Premier could also ask: what basis is used to determine the size of this allocation? Does it fairly reflect the total number of flights in and out of these airports? Does it fairly reflect the population and its needs? How far ahead must a resident book to get this fare? Finally, why is it cheaper to fly to Auckland from Longreach than it is to fly from Longreach to Brisbane? It is simply not fair. We are supposed to be having residents fares because it is a regulated route. I call on the Deputy Premier and the government to investigate this so we can get a fair go at getting fair flights from Longreach.